
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 March 2021

by Stuart Willis BA Hons MSc PGCE MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/20/3260887

22 Fernbrook Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7HG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr A Lyttle against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 200954, dated 7 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 25 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is 2 storey side extension and 1st floor rear extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. At the time of my site visit, an extension was partly constructed. However, there were differences from the submitted plans such as in the rear elevation openings. I have therefore dealt with the appeal as a proposed development based on the submitted plans.
3. The appellant has included revised plans and a Bat Survey with their appeal. While not before the Council at the time of their decision, they were submitted at the outset of the appeal and therefore parties have had the opportunity to comment.
4. The overall design and position of the scheme has not altered from that originally submitted and upon which consultation took place with the revised plans including existing windows that had been omitted. Against this backdrop, no injustice would be caused to any appeal party or third party if I were to take these details into account. I have considered the appeal on that basis.

Main Issues

5. The main issues of the appeal are the effects of the proposed development on;
 - The living conditions of the occupiers of 24 Fernbrook Road, with particular regard to outlook;
 - The character and appearance of the area; and
 - Biodiversity.

Reasons

Living Conditions

6. The existing first floor side elevation windows at 24 Fernbrook (No 24) have an outlook towards the appeal property. The extension would be angled from these windows and set in from the boundary to some degree. Notwithstanding this, the appeal scheme would bring the built form considerably closer to these windows.
7. I do not have detailed information regarding any previous alterations to the larger side elevation window at No 24 or its compliance with current permitted development rights. However, the window provides the sole outlook for a bedroom. The height and proximity of the proposed extension would mean it would overwhelmingly dominate the outlook from this room with only limited angled views away from it. That this arrangement is similar to the appeal property with its other neighbour does not alter that this proposal would result in an uninviting outlook from the bedroom at No 24.
8. Although the outlook from the smaller side elevation window at No 24 would also be limited, there would be an alternative lookout from a far larger window on the front elevation for that room.
9. Nevertheless, the proposed development would unacceptably harm the living conditions of the occupiers of No 24 with regard to outlook. It would fail to accord with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Local Plan) where it, in part, seeks to prevent unacceptable harm to outlook.

Character and Appearance

10. While there is some consistency in the appearance of the properties in the street, there are examples of side extensions of differing sizes and designs. The proposed extension would result in the dwelling filling much of its plot width. Nevertheless, this not uncommon with several nearby properties filling most of their frontage. The overall bulk of the proposal would also not be discordant with the surrounding development given the scale of the other properties in the street.
11. The roof design would be more complex than the existing hipped roof. Nevertheless, the overall hipped appearance would be retained, and the scheme would be seen with the variety of roof styles nearby.
12. Although partially at the same ridge height as the main dwelling, the extension roofline would be stepped down where it would adjoin the existing property. Moreover, the proposed extension would also be stepped back from the front building line and considerably narrower than the existing dwelling. These factors, and the pattern of openings on the front elevation would ensure it would be read as an extension rather than a separate dwelling.
13. The rear elevation of the extension would have some blank areas. Nonetheless, while smaller than the existing rear windows, the proposed ones would still be of a good size and their proportions comparable to the existing windows.
14. Consequently, the proposed development would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The scheme would accord with Policy

CC7 of the Local Plan where it, in part, requires proposals to respond positively to their local context.

Ecology

15. The Bat Survey found no bats or evidence of bat occupancy and that overall, the building provided bats with Negligible Roosting Suitability. On this basis no further survey work was recommended. From the evidence before me, I have reached the same finding. Were the appeal to be allowed, conditions could be imposed where necessary with regard to ecological enhancements.
16. Therefore, the proposed development would not be harmful to biodiversity. It would comply with Policy EN12 of the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework where they seek to protect species and their habitats.

Other Matters

17. The proposal would provide improved accommodation and allow the property to be reconfigured to better suit the medical and health needs of the appellant's family. In exercising my function on behalf of a public authority, I have had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which sets out the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity. The proposed development would assist persons who share a protected characteristic for the purposes of the PSED.
18. However, it does not follow though from the PSED that the appeal should succeed. An application for a single storey extension has already been approved that would provide some of the facilities required. I am unable to conclude that the appeal scheme would be the only solution to meeting the resident's requirements and this lessens the benefit arising from the proposal.
19. I have identified harm in respect of the living conditions of the occupiers of No 24 that outweighs these personal matters and it is a proportionate and justifiable reason to dismiss the appeal.

Conclusion

20. For the reason given I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Stuart Willis

INSPECTOR